The Portrait of Shifting Light

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The Portrait of Shifting Light

by Maven_Morozov

Summary

Hannibal asks him his name, and the omega looks up, sulking and moody just as Hannibal imagined. He has wide eyes, narrowed slightly in suspicion, and flushed cheeks due to the cold. Brown curls settle in a lovely manner across his forehead, and Hannibal wonders what it would feel like to simply brush them aside as he lays a kiss on his brow.

“Why should I tell you?” the boy asks, not even trying to mask the annoyance that flows off of his shoulders in waves, along with that deliciously prickling omega scent. “You’re a stranger. Dad says not to talk to strangers.”

Hannibal feels his mouth quirk up at one corner, amusement filling his chest at the boy’s rudeness. Usually, it would irritate him, and he’d be asking for a business card for his rolodex. But this is a boy, and an omega, and as he stands up, Hannibal can see his short, curvy figure, and he’s finding it hard to think rationally. *He wants this boy. He will have this boy.*

Notes

originally written for a few hannictober writing prompts, extended into a multichapter. whoops!

read the tags, read em again. i don't condone anything i'm writing irl. now let's get into it folks:P

See the end of the work for more notes

Autumn

It's late fall when Hannibal first finds the omega, huddling under the park stone bridge that marks the change in neighborhood towards his home in Baltimore. He hesitates to approach the lad—clearly the boy is sulking and wants to be alone—but the keen smell of his slightly sweet, slightly warm scent draws Hannibal closer. He wants to protect the boy, to hold him. His alpha senses say, *Here's an omega. Now do what you do best.*

Hannibal asks him his name, and the omega looks up, sulking and moody just as Hannibal imagined. He has wide eyes, narrowed slightly in suspicion, and flushed cheeks due to the cold. Brown curls settle in a lovely manner across his forehead, and Hannibal wonders what it would feel like to simply brush them aside as he lays a kiss on his brow.

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"Are you alright?" Hannibal opts to ask this time. "You seem upset."

"None of your business," the omega spits. "Leave me alone."

"If you have somewhere to go," Hannibal says with a continued smile. "The evening is only going to harden further as it gets darker. I can offer you a cup of tea if you need to talk."

The omega purses his lips, those wonderful lips, full and plush and perfectly pink. Hannibal would love to bite them, and have from them escape sounds of pure ecstasy. But he puts that fantasy aside for later. There are more acute worries now.

"Fine," the boy finally bites out, and his eyelashes flutter as he blinks away dust and brushes his hands over his sides. "Can you give me a ride home after?"

"Of course," Hannibal agrees pleasantly. He's suddenly very pleased that he chose to take a walk through the park today, and specifically the path that heads under this bridge. "I wouldn't be a gentlemanly alpha if I offered anything less."

Beside him, the boy flushes. "You're an alpha?" His voice is quiet, and for the first time, lacks that immediate roughness. There's something hesitant and almost *demure* to its quality. Hannibal preens to himself at the sound of it. "I would think you would have noticed," he replies.

The omega shakes his head slowly. “Yes and no.” A brief pause, during which the blush on his face deepens. “I’m still practicing being able to tell apart beta and alpha scents,” he admits. “Right now I can only sense if someone’s an omega or not an omega.”

Hannibal nods thoughtfully, and they begin to walk. “We are drawn to others like ourselves, firstly and foremostly in our lives, before we seek out the comfort and companionship of others,” he muses. “It befits your social sphere to have connections to other omegas before you can make sense of the hierarchies of others in the world, and the social politics at play...but of course, there’s no need to worry about all of that now.” Hannibal gives him a small smile of assurance, and it seems to assuage some of the nervousness that has been knotting on the boy’s face as Hannibal gave his monologue.

“I guess it was pretty easy to tell that I was an omega, then,” his young companion mutters. He won’t meet Hannibal’s eyes, and the blush has crept to his neck. His lovely, *exposed* neck, unhidden by the cloth confines of a scarf.

A scarf. Hannibal feels his step lighten; he knows just perfectly the first way in which he will endear this boy to him. A warm gift, yes, certainly, but also a mode of possessiveness that the omega will never guess at—his neck will be kept delightfully hidden from any other alpha that might glance his way. It will be a sight reserved for Hannibal himself, alone.

Tucking the thought away, he chuckles lightly. “It’s not such a bad thing, to be an omega.”

“Spoken like a true alpha,” the boy snorts. He looks youthful then, not so alluring, not so sensuous. Hannibal would still like to gather him in his arms and fold him into a hug. “You wouldn’t know a single damn thing about what it’s like to be me.”

“Wouldn’t I?” Hannibal asks. “And watch your tongue, little boy.” It’s lighthearted, but firm.

The omega’s frown deepens, eyebrows settling heavy over his eyes. “I’m thirteen,” he scoffs. “And ‘damn’s’ not a terrible word, anyway.”

Hannibal’s heart skips a beat. He imagined this boy to be in his teenage years, yes, but not so young. This makes him more impressionable, more exciting of a prospect, more of a prize to win over. And infinitely more valuable as an omega, of course.

“I suppose it isn’t,” Hannibal agrees. “But what would your parents say?”

He only *just* notices the shadow that passes over the boy’s face. “I don’t know,” he says after a moment.

Then—

“How long until we reach your house? It’s chilly.”

“Tea will be the perfect remedy,” says Hannibal. He makes a note of the abrupt change in subject. Parents are a touchy subject, it seems. Interesting. He wonders if he will be able to coax that from the young omega over the tea he plans to prepare. Perhaps, he can sneak in a few tongue-loosening agents. Calming agents, that is.

This is already proving to be exhilarating. And Hannibal knows for sure now, he's absolutely positive, right as he pulls out the key to his house, and he and the boy walk up his front steps —he will claim this omega as his own.

A Boy Named Will

Chapter Notes

> thank you all for your love on chapter 1! i truly did not expect this, and i hope that i can live up to your expectations. the chapters will probably be shorter in the beginning and lengthen out over time as the plot builds. not quite sure how long this is gonna get, we'll see.
>
> enjoy!

The omega is wary as they step through the doorway together. Hannibal understands; his home can be large and overbearing to those who are unused to the comforts he lives in. The boy's eyes shift around the room like little flickers of a candle, and his weight shifts from side to side.

Hannibal leads him into the kitchen with a smile, where a small table in the corner waits for them both. He has the omega sit down there, and hides the hunger in his gaze *just enough* while he busies himself getting them both cups of tea. "There's regular Earl Grey, of course," he explains to the boy, who stares up at him with those still-twitching eyes. They blink terribly, and if Hannibal could only just leave his lids propped open to stare at the depths of the child's stuttering stare...he would. "We also have a few of my own herbal blends."

"I'll stick with Earl Grey for now," the omega responds quietly. He begins to add something else, something that begins with something that sounds funnily enough like ' *next,'* but seems to think better of it, sitting back in his chair and nodding to himself. "Earl Grey's good." A little shiver skitters across his shoulders and he shakes gently.

Hannibal can tell he is trying his best to be polite, though he is clearly unused to this environment, and perhaps, he thinks, the boy is chilly from their walk. Carefully, slowly so as to not scare a flighty creature, Hannibal peels off his own sweater—jacket already having been removed from his frame and hung on a hook—and holds it out to him with a smile. "Please, wear this—" He pauses. "What is your name, dear boy?"

The young omega cocks his head, smirking a bit, then takes the sweater from Hannibal with not-quite-hesitancy, but certainly not enthusiasm either. After a moment, pulls it over his head and runs his hands along the soft cashmere. Hannibal feels his belly warm from the inside at the sight.

Then the boy looks up at Hannibal, calculating. "I shouldn't tell that to strangers. Dad says not to."

Hannibal, now filtering the tea through mini-strainers into each of their cups and pouring the hot water carefully, stiffens. *That will surely be a firm wall under pressure,* he thinks. “Your father seems to have many rules for you,” he says aloud. Diplomatic. Mellow. He slips an herb into the boy’s tea that he neglects in his own, then replaces all the teas in the jars in the cabinet, and sets the cup of tea before the omega, who lets out a crude grunt of thanks.

“Well. That’s what dads do, right?” he mutters. “They’re supposed to take care of you.” There’s something hard in his tone, tight and almost bitter in its sharpness. Hannibal wonders, if he pushed just a bit further, if the sheen of the omega’s words would wear off completely, revealing a polished knife of diction and phrase.

He elects to not push—not yet, at least. There’s time for that. He lets the boy take a sip, drinking in the sight of his bobbing pale throat and small fingers, and says, “You are already here, drinking tea in my home, and relaying to me your feelings, if you feel willing. I am here to listen to you. What is the harm in me knowing your name?”

It’s logic, simple and pure, and the thirteen-year-old boy before him can’t resist it. He scowls, sets down his teacup with a rude *clank.* Hannibal takes a sip of his own.

“Will,” the boy finally mutters, low and gruff. “My name is Will.”

“Will,” Hannibal repeats, and watches the way the boy reacts to his name, the way the single smooth syllable rolls from Hannibal’s tongue. “Tell me. What is troubling you?”

The omega— *Will’s*— eyes darken. But his gaze never leaves Hannibal’s, and as he stares into his eyes, Hannibal can see his pupils dilate. Almost imperceptibly—but Hannibal notices, and feels his lips twitch up in a smile. Whether his own expression is voluntary or involuntary, he can’t say. But he’s absolutely sure that young Will does not notice his body’s own telltale signs. Oh, the innocence! Hannibal would take him now, if the situation permitted.

He practically has to physically reign in his fervor. This is a random child that he met just minutes ago—at most. an hour—at a public park. He marvels at his own attentions.

Finally, Will breaks eye contact, gaze flitting everywhere sporadically again, and he won’t look at Hannibal directly again. Another sip of tea, and then he speaks. “My dad wants to sell me to an alpha,” he admits, face flushed pink with embarrassment, and looking as if he can’t quite believe how nonchalant his voice sounds. “Money’s running low. It’s one of his only options. I know it’s what’s best for both of us.” Each statement is clipped, short, tidy. Bristling with unspoken resentment that Hannibal knows Will won’t admit to.

“Is there—”

“I can’t legally say no,” Will interrupts, voice pitched higher, and takes another sip of tea. Hannibal smiles to himself while Will’s eyes are hidden behind his cup.

“Even if I wasn’t an omega, I’d still be a minor, and even as a beta, my dad could do whatever he needed to do to—”

“Whatever he *felt* like he needed to do,” Hannibal corrects gently. “Your choice matters, too, Will.”

It doesn’t, of course. Hannibal is insatiably delighted with this turn of events. Will is a delicious, almost-ripe, omega. For *sale.* It’s already one opening for Hannibal himself to step through—but he mustn’t rush, he reminds himself. Will must like him, must *adore* him, otherwise their bond will have no passion, and Hannibal might as well be mated to a rock.

Before him, Will ducks his neck. Shyly, in a manner, coy or timid to what others might perceive, but Hannibal is a better people-reader than most, and especially so when it comes to omegas. Will is *embarrassed* by Hannibal’s small, intangible token of affection, the one show of solidarity.

When he flits his eyes to Hannibal’s again, the blush on his face has spread to that lovely little neck. “Uh...thanks,” he mutters, grimacing to himself.

Hannibal stays quiet, lets the calming drug do its work, lets Will relay his secrets and insecurities.

“It’s just that,” the omega continues quietly, “it’s not just a sale he wants.” There’s something funny in his tone now, a detached, floating sort of sound, like water that has just splashed over jagged stones in a creek.

“What does he want, Will?” Hannibal asks, hungrily leaning forward, relishing the boy’s name on his tongue. He cannot wait until he coos it as a verbal caress against the crook of the omega’s collarbone and neck, breathing in his scent from its source as he pounds into him mercilessly, Will making little panting noises under him.

Right now, though, Will’s lips part, full and heavy, and laden with melancholy. “He wants an auction.”

Inside the trappings of his physical body, Hannibal practically purrs.

Passenger

Chapter Notes

> i apologize for the long wait in updating. i thought i'd be posting chapters pretty much consistently throughout october, but uni got the better of me. ah well! this chapter is my humble apology, and chapter 4 should be out soon as well;)

It's more difficult than Hannibal expects to let Will leave the comfort of his home, leading the boy to his Bentley with a faux-concern regarding the time. He finds his body attached to Will's, almost like a magnet, the yin-yang biology of them both desperately clinging together.

When Will clambers into the backseat, a stray curl flying across his eyes, Hannibal reaches out, rather without thinking, and brushes it behind the boy's ear, quickly drawing his hand away and shutting the door immediately. He dearly hopes the omega will simply attribute the caress to that of the caring hand of a father, the kind of physical touch that an authority alpha figure would leave on any child.

But, as Hannibal is sure, Will is bound to be perceptive, and so he draws within himself as he gets into the driver's seat, sparing the boy in his backseat only a spare passing glance in the rear view, pleasant expression masking over the tumult of sensations raging within his body. He obtains directions from the omega, then asks, "Would you care for heating, Will?"

The boy nods solemnly and leans against the window, breath fogging up the glass in the still-chilly car. "Thank you for driving me home."

"Of course," Hannibal replies, obliging the thanks with a deeper smile. It's genuine, but not because he is pleased that Will is leaving him. No—currently, the boy is inadvertently leaving his precious omegan pheromones all over the leather of the backseat of the vehicle, complete with the distinct scent of developing adolescence. It's a sharp smell that meets Hannibal's keen alpha nose, the natural sweetness infused with something almost bitter, a fruit that has not ripened quite yet. Will Graham's father, whoever this mysterious figure may be, must be in a dreadful hurry for cash to be auctioning his omega son so young.

Not that Hannibal can blame him, having been in precarious financial situations in the past himself. Of course, he'd had family to rely on after Mischa died, and his place as a fledgling alpha in the world aided his plight.

The Grahams, on the other end…well. Desperate times call for desperate measures, and who is Hannibal to berate the man when he is so willing to send Will into Hannibal's doting, deceitful arms?

On the drive to Will's home, he continues to learn more about him, and despite the information the boy had revealed to him in Hannibal's kitchen, he seems at an odd calmness. *Resignation* , Hannibal thinks.

It's not such a bad thing, to be an omega, he had foolishly spoken to Will as they exited the park. He cannot take back his words now, only be an emotional shoulder for the young omega to lean on as he recounts how his father moved them from greater New Orleans to Baltimore when Will was rounding five, and it was a good thing too, because Hurricane Katrina hit the city not long after.

Hannibal learns that Beau Graham is a beta, a traditional one at that, and otherwise not notable, in Hannibal's sensible opinion. He is useful as a tool to access Will, and of course, as a peek into what Will's childhood might say about his future, but Hannibal could care less about him as a person.

He learns that Will's auction is in barely a week. Something in Hannibal's chest drops at that knowledge, the limited time he has to win stubborn, dear Will's hard-won favor. The boy may appreciate him now, but he must *need* him for their coupling to be truly blissful. Hannibal knows, *feels* it with a pang, that fostering such dependence is impossible in that short amount of time, but he can still make small moves. Will, after all, has spread out in his backseat, lying on his back as they drive outside the city and towards the bay—the rough section, not the tourist scene.

Will's not quite yet asleep, though his eyelids flutter in the semidarkness, and so Hannibal dares to ask, "How did you make it all the way to the city to begin with, dear Will?" He's careful to keep his voice light, to place barely any weight at all on the *dear*.

For a moment, Hannibal thinks that Will might not respond after all. In the rear view mirror, he can see that the boy's face is turned to the side on the backseat, scent glands along his neck marking the leather, curls haloing his pale face and lips parted slightly in laxness. But then—

"Dad's at work," Will mumbles quietly. "Works all day in that damn boatyard and most weekends I'd help him, but…" He lets out a long sigh, and in the front seat, Hannibal just barely catches the omegan scent of his breath, whiffing in the traces of it.

"I have one last weekend before I belong to a stranger," Will continues mournfully. "I caught a ride in with a neighbor's kid down the road—he's sixteen, can drive, an alpha, too." He pauses in his story, and Hannibal's ears prick, listening to the shallowness of Will's voice and breath in the back. It's picked up in speed, and he can practically feel the palpable fear fermenting in Will's tone.

"He. Well," Will whispers quietly, eyes finally settling closed. "He's an alpha. And a teenage boy."

Nothing more needs to be said.

This, apparently, is how Will ended up alone, curled under the little stone bridge, and what a coincidental stroke of luck for them both. Hannibal will care for Will more than any other

alpha would, and he, in turn, will *own* the little vixen.

Will lets himself fall asleep in the Bentley's backseat, drooling adorably just a bit on the leather, and Hannibal watches him fondly. When they finally reach Will's home, the sky has completely darkened, and Hannibal pulls into the dirt driveway slowly. He's gentle about waking Will up, a steady hand on his shoulder, another brush of those slight curls, and he smiles when Will rolls over in the backseat, blinking until things can come into focus.

"The time has come for us to part," Hannibal says, knowing full well that they will meet again. "I do hope that I could prove to you an adequate companion this evening."

For the first time, Will blushes, a blush that is not of embarrassment, that is. It is simply gorgeous; Hannibal revels in the simplicity of pink on pale skin, the slight heat radiating off of the omega's skin and face nearly glowing in the darkness, lit only by the Bentley's headlights.

"You were," Will responds, voice slightly gruff, not meeting Hannibal's eyes. "Thanks."

He shrugs Hannibal's hand off his shoulder (*Had he really left it lying there?)* with a self-conscious licking of his plush lips and steps out of the car gingerly.

Hannibal watches Will walk towards his house, drowning in Hannibal's sweater (*How could Hannibal be so cruel as to ask for it back?*), narrowing his eyes at the figure in the window, a father waiting for his son, silhouetted by the indoor light. One week, he promises himself.

He can wait that long.

The Auction

Chapter Summary

> The day of Will's auction arrives, and Hannibal is all to ready to begin formally seducing his young omega.

Chapter Notes

> this chapter's a bit longer than the previous ones, so that's my apology to y'all for making everyone wait! thank you so so much for all the love you've given this fic so far! enjoy heathens<3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The day of the auction comes swiftly, sneaking up behind Hannibal in a manner that he would never permit a person to. He was careful, on that first meeting with Will, to gain the omega's trust, the gentle touch of eye-caresses, the polite inquiries, the concern, not laid upon the conversation overtly, rather, just under the surface. Hidden in the tones of voice and the movements of his shoulders. Hannibal is nothing if not cautious.

Omegas are like small forest critters, barely developed lambs. Especially those around Will's age, even if this one has more fire in them than Hannibal has experienced in a long while. Scared away easily, fragile bodies and minds, skittish. And yet—beneath that—deeply perceptive, always wary. This, of course, is the cause of Hannibal's extreme wariness in his quest to pull Will to his side. Especially with the boy's keen intelligence. One wrong move, and he loses the omega forever.

At their first meeting, Will already trusted Hannibal enough to reveal his anxieties surrounding his upcoming auction—not only a traumatizing sale, as it were, but a true *auction.* Reserved for the finest omegas (and Will, dear, porcelain creature, certainly qualifies), and almost quaint in its process.

Hannibal can remember in his youth how common omega auctions were. The practice was common up until the late 1960s across the world, and though now faces scrutiny from progressive omega circles, it still continues to be a cultural norm in Eastern Europe for longer than in the Western hemisphere.

Of course, the auctions are nearly universally abhorred in societies that had experienced little to no colonization from the Europeans, where the auctioning of omegas had started. It is almost terribly fitting and a parallel to everything else in history that in the United States,

auctioning persists—holding onto the poison that had transferred with every other imperialistic tendency.

Right now, despite his other modern sensibilities, Hannibal is incredibly grateful for the morbid traditionalism of most cities in the mid-Atlantic United States, and therefore, in Baltimore. It would be cruel, he thinks, to simply sell Will to the first alpha who wanted him, throwing him away like a cheap whore.

No. Will is an antique, a rare item that resurfaces from obscurity every few centuries, hailing from some ancient dynasty. A particularly stunning gene bubbling to the surface of his family's offspring. Hannibal collects antiques, relics.

It is only fitting.

Since their first meeting, Hannibal has sent him gourmet chocolates of his own creation rather regularly and received nothing in reply, as he expected. He has sent but two cards, short notes that could have been sent by anyone, but oozing with wealth in the expensive but small gifts and heavy cardstock quality of the letters themselves. Hannibal must be sure that Beau Graham knows that his son has caught the eye of a high-class alpha; it will surely drive up competition at Will's auction and therefore not undermine his quality. After all, Hannibal would not want to embarrass the poor boy by winning him right from the beginning.

Not that Hannibal doubts that quite a few other alphas will try their hand at the prize anyway.

The letters, however, starchly pressed in simplicity and with a closed-off sort of fond affection, cannot even dare to compare with the accompanying chocolates. Hannibal can still smell the metallic tang of thick human blood, giving the chocolates their rich, tangy quality and deep color of crimson undertones.

He smiles now as he thinks of it, adjusting his tie and giving himself a once-over in the mirror before him. There is not a single wrinkle on his tuxedo, and the silver of his hair is drawn up and to the side with a fine mousse. Young boys are fond of sweets, even on the bud of being teenagers as they may be. And though Will holds the matches that would let him strike the pilot flame of maturity, he has not quite reached that level. He exists in the in-between, the so called *nymphet* coined by Nabokov Humbert, and his omegan nature serves only to prolong the intensity of this phase of his life. As always, Hannibal capitalizes.

So indeed, young boys are fond of sweets, and Will Graham is no exception. He will grow content on the blood of pigs lesser than him, chubby and flushed as a child ought to be. Hannibal's sweet omega pet, fine foods at his lips and cruel murder on his tongue.

And finally, *finally,* when all traces of resistance are gone, when Will depends on Hannibal for his every wish and need and action, Hannibal will claim physically the ownership he will soon hold legally.

Somehow, he manages to stay calm the entire drive, tucking the small package sitting on his passenger's seat into his pocket before offering the Bentley to the valet at the auction venue and striding through the double doors with a calm, regal posture that hides all of the feral desire riffling the insides of his body.

He's about to sit at one of the front tables where a soft white tablecloth is placed just right when a familiar cough stops him in his tracks and causes him to turn slowly. The cough belongs to a woman, an alpha with blonde curls and an intelligent, solemn face. His colleague in psychiatry, as well as his therapist. Bedelia du Maurier.

Hannibal lifts his lips and inclines his head politely. "Dr. Du Maurier. This is a surprise, though not entirely an unwelcome one."

Bedelia smiles just barely, though it doesn't dare to meet her eyes, where only a hint of playfulness resides, dancing at the tips of her pupils. "Did you think you were the only one in need of a companion, Hannibal?"

He takes her words as an invitation, and after a short, considering pause, he sits beside her. Immediately, one of the venue's staff, a slim Japanese woman, is standing before him with a small drink menu, and Hannibal takes it with a nod of thanks. He cannot scent anything significant from her, and he thinks it's rather prudent of the auction committee to hire beta waiters, ushers, and valets. They won't be as susceptible to the palpable hormones that will shortly commence to fill the room.

Hannibal orders a drink and so does Bedelia, the latter's eyes lingering longer than necessary on their—admittedly beautiful—waitress. After a moment of indecision, Hannibal shuts his mouth from where it was barely open in a question. His psychiatrist can lay her eyes on whoever she likes. Perhaps that was the venue's intention of hiring aesthetically pleasing wait staff—keep the alphas in order and without antsiness before the omegas are brought out.

"You're quieter than usual today, Hannibal," Bedelia says suddenly, eyes flashing curiously, and he nearly flinches— *nearly* —as he pulls his eyes reluctantly from the raised platform that leads from the side door to the center of the room, rather like a fashion runway.

"There is a specific child I wish to buy today," he murmurs, tilting his head as he lets his eyes close to better imagine his Will.

His Will. The young omega already belongs to Hannibal in his mind, and now that he's this close to obtaining him as his own, *claiming* him soon after, he can allow himself to fantasize: his Will spread in sheer silks upon Hannibal's king-size mattress, pretty little flush on those boyish cheeks, lips parted in sensations he has never felt before, all because of the alpha at his cunt, little wisps of tongue that pry apart his folds and two thick fingers caressing his vestigial cock. Small. Beautiful. Hannibal's perfect, darling, nymphet.

His curls, too, will be in disarray, as well as the thin cloth pulled up around his chest, where small peaks of tissue hint at what they will swell to become once he is pregnant with Hannibal's children. Oh his perfect darling, already become a mother when he is barely out of childhood himself, small body straining to hold their pups.

Hannibal swallows, whisking the fantasy away when he feels his cock hardening. Bedelia smiles at him knowingly. "You've met the omega, then?"

"Once," Hannibal replies in a soft voice. The picture returns to him, Will's pink cheeks in the crisp autumn air, bare chilly neck, and eyes slightly teary with the gusts of wind that passed

under the footbridge. “That was all that was necessary.”

“Is he quite submissive?” Bedelia asks.

Hannibal only smirks, pausing before answering, as their waitress has returned to them, wine for them both. Bedelia has chosen red, a far cry from her usual simple whites, and Hannibal watches as she takes the glass from the beta, blinking slowly. The waitress, on the other hand, stays expressionless, as she has been trained to do. As her place as a beta would allow her to do in a flirtatious alpha’s presence. Her only betrayal is a slight twitch of one eye.

“Not exactly,” he finally answers when Bedelia’s attention has somewhat returned to him. The smirk across his lips widens. “He may require some breaking in.”

Bedelia’s eyes darken. “Well then, I wish you luck.”

It’s the last thing either of them can say before the house lights dim, spotlight highlighting the raised platform where the omegas will be auctioned to the highest bidder. Soft music, live from a small piano in the corner of the room, soon smooths out the leftover conversations, and the room silences politely. Around them, Hannibal can see other alphas, mostly men but a few women, but their faces themselves are shadowed by the dim light.

A pencil-thin man soon steps up to the podium, beta by the scent of him, again, to keep the rowdier of alphas in order and the proceedings smooth. He rings a bell Hannibal hadn’t noticed before gently, then places it with the utmost smoothness back upon the wooden ledge. “Good evening, fine gentlemen.” His voice is reedy and grates like tin across tin. Hannibal tries not to grimace.

Beside him, Bedelia raises an eyebrow, and someone seems to catch the auctioneer’s eye, as he coughs lightly and corrects himself. “ *Ladies* and gentlemen, we bring you the latest stock of the *finest* omegas from across the mid-Atlantic. By the end of this gathering today, I wish you all to have obedient and beautiful young mates, ready to please you in every way…”

Hannibal lets the voice dull to a fine buzz in the back of his head, knowing the traditional practiced script by heart. He has attended many omega auctions himself, never truly with the intention of purchasing ones, though. The presumption that every alpha will walk away with a mate is amusing at best and preposterous at worst. Not only is this a functional event, it is a social one. Though, of course, it’s polite to assume that an alpha *is* indeed attending for the intended purpose, as Bedelia did for him just a few minutes ago.

Finally, the introductory remarks have finished, and the omegas are led out, one by one, each presented as if they were children of divine beings. They could be, Hannibal can admit to themselves. Most of the omegas are young, between the ages of nine and nineteen, he can presume, in various stages of development. Only a couple are freckled with the barest hint of acne, however, for indeed, this auction highlights the highest quality of their breed.

The omegas’ beauty are accentuated by the thin chains of gold they bear around their wrists, the metal snaking like beads up their arms and around their necks to form the suggestion of a collar. These are merely for show—no omega has attempted to escape an auction in decades,

at least in the Baltimore area; most are far too docile to even consider the prospect of not being bought and married by a wealthy suitor.

Hannibal can't help but notice that though these omegas are indeed beautiful, none compare to his little Will, even in their made up faces and clad in delicate garments provided by the auction facility. Beside him, Bedelia is far too distracted with their beta waiter, the younger Japanese woman responding to the older alpha's glances as time goes on.

He sips his wine, slides his index finger against the long edge of the bidding paddle on the white tablecloth before him, and waits.

Will's grand entrance comes somewhere Hannibal supposes is the middle of the event, enough time passed to get the alphas moving and active in their bids, but not too long as to leave only the dregs of the auction-goers behind. It's precarious, the lineup of these higher-class auctions; lesser omegas would be sold in front of large, salivating crowds of alphas and betas alike, none whom would be able to pay for a mate, auction or not. But at least—the crowd would be lively all day.

Luckily for Will— *un* luckily for Hannibal if he were an alpha of lesser means—the boy is placed in this happy medium, led out by his manacles and collar, small and delicate underneath his nearly sheer garment. Aside from his youthful, round cheeks, Will is so much skinnier without the bulk of his autumn clothing, and Hannibal feels the stirrings of resentment prickling at his throat. Will Graham is clearly underfed, house full of low-class betas unable to adequately support a growing child.

Still, despite Will's underweight nature, or rather, *because* of it, the alphas in the room begin to sit straighter, a cloying blend of pheromones clogging the air in all their intensity. Something hot and slightly nauseating is bubbling in Hannibal's own chest, and relentless against his attempts to swallow it down, he can practically feel the possessive need to protect Will, care for him, *own him,* joining the silent need of the other alphas.

It's quite impossible to distinguish which scents are coming from who, how thick they are. Even Bedelia's hackles are raised, and Hannibal only barely notices the way that the beta staff glance at each other, ready for anything.

Then, Will's eyes meet Hannibal's. Aurora borealis, piercing even from across the slightly dimmed room, shining with kohl round the edges. He blinks once, twice, cocks his head, luscious lips parted. Just a moment after, the moment of surprise is gone—perhaps it was never truly there at all—and Will is regarding Hannibal with frank suspicion, perhaps relief. Most likely both, that clever boy. He's right to question Hannibal's motives; he's right to question everything about the world.

Hannibal bids highest, of course. The other alphas, desperate as they may be, stand no chance against Hannibal's sheer wealth (and potent desire). As his omega's price heightens steeply, a few of the other alphas begin to growl, animalistic tendencies revealing themselves even at such a prestigious event. It's rude, frankly. Hannibal makes a note of the man who slaps his bidding paddle upon the table with uncoordinated crassness.

Eyes shining with the prospect of what Hannibal has offered, triple any other bid (he'd given his peers a few chances to bid higher than himself before going all in and closing the deal), the auctioneer leads Will, still staring at Hannibal with that stunning, almost-defiant gaze, to his new alpha. Technically they are not yet mates—they have not yet sealed the bond with the defining bites and ritual coupling—but Hannibal now controls anything Will does. His darling boy, his brazen omega, all Hannibal's to mold and taste.

When their hands touch and Will is firmly beside Hannibal at the side of the podium, the chains are removed from Will's lithe neck and wrists, the omega rolling his joints to smooth the places where hints of red disturb the otherwise pale flesh. They leave together, Hannibal nodding at Bedelia and the beta leaning over her as they go. He does make sure to obtain the business card of the alpha who'd almost caused a scene, smiling pleasantly at him as the other man glares at them both through gritted teeth.

Once in the Bentley, Will safely strapped into the passenger's seat, Hannibal hands him the package he'd had in his pocket. It's the promised scarf, deep red and long enough to wrap around Will's neck twice, which he does. "Thank you," Will says quietly, eyes flitting over Hannibal's form quickly before settling firmly on the dashboard, and those are their first words together since that cold day in November.

A moment later— "I'm glad it's you."

Hannibal lets what was once a scalding bubble in his chest cool to a pleasant warm feeling, which stays with him the entire drive home.

Chapter End Notes

comments are love!!<3 have a very merry christmas to all of you who celebrate! if not, i hope you're having a good december so far and stay safe everyone!

Homecoming

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will, Hannibal thinks, is absolutely radiant in the evening light. The sun has set now—how thankful Hannibal is for an evening auction—and Will is pliant beneath his fingers, soothed from the lull of the car, when Hannibal lifts him from the passenger's seat and carries him into the house. It's a bridal carry, of course, for Hannibal is nothing if not reverent of his young omega bride, and as Will is nearly asleep in Hannibal's arms, he snuggles closer, rubbing his face—and by proxy, the scent glands on his neck—over Hannibal's shoulder. It's a biological instinct, though the boy barely knows it yet.

He lays Will across the sofa first and starts a small fire, letting him warm from Baltimore's biting chill outside, watching as his cheeks turn rosy from the heat. Then he prepares dinner. No doubt that despite his fatigue, the boy must be starving; typically, omegas are not allowed to eat prior to their auctions to keep them small and unbloated. Hannibal himself did not eat this evening, choosing to wait for his darling Will.

He cooks quickly, the ingredients already prepped in the refrigerator, smoked thigh (a beta policeman under who'd slipped past the investigative phase of a murder he was involved in) and roasted root vegetables accompanied by mini chocolate cakes. Dessert is something that even Hannibal doesn't usually indulge in—not for reasons of health necessarily, rather that his meals are already rich and he has no need for it—but for Will, Hannibal will provide.

As he expects, the boy's eyes light up despite their drowsiness from his dose in the Bentley, and he leans forward, scooping the cake into his mouth with all the grace of a pre-teenager. Hannibal will have to teach him how to eat politely, to tame his childish ways into that of a proper young omega. Though—he can't have his Will entirely docile. There would be no fun in that, after all.

Their dinner finishes sooner than Hannibal would like; he enjoys watching Will consume the food Hannibal has cooked for him, eyeing every twitch of muscle in his jaw as his omega chews and the bob of his slender throat as he swallows.

There are simply so many things that Hannibal cannot wait to do to Will's throat. Soon his precious omega will beg for it, too, whatever his reluctance level may be now.

Hannibal is so lost in his thoughts that he almost doesn't catch the flicker of Will's ever-changing eyes to his, slow blink accentuated by those long lashes. There's a question in that gaze, for every moment of eye contact with Will Graham is a blessing and filled with intention. He is a child of sparing words and even more sparing communication through his face. He hides; there might be anything lurking below that seemingly innocent exterior.

Hannibal knows psychopaths and sociopaths. Knows the sane and knows the unique case of himself. Will Graham is a mystery in all these things, and Hannibal knows, without a doubt, that it will not be him who will break the walls of the boy's mind. No—instead, Will is going

to hand him the key himself, and Hannibal will walk within him, be in him at all times. It's a tantalizing thought.

For now, though, he only offers the omega a sly smile in response. "We won't do anything you are not ready for, darling boy."

Will nods, and his child-mask slips—there's relief in every inch of his face, evident further in the calming of his pheromones.

They move to the bedroom. As Hannibal promised, there is no consummation of their legal arrangement, no official mating ceremony or anything of that nature at all. Instead, Hannibal undresses his bride, sensual but not sexual, his hands running just barely over Will's skin, magnetic levitation, at points skidding where his palm touches warm flesh and then smoothing themselves out again.

The auction clothes are discarded—they are nothing more than gaudy garments intended for that purpose only. The scarf is hung on a hook by the bedroom door. Will puts on pajamas, soft cotton and breathable, though soon he will be wearing only slip-like nightgowns to bed. Hannibal has a growing collection of near-lingerie nightclothes in Will's walk-in closet. His omega is not ready for them yet, though. Not when he still shivers from Hannibal's touch instead of practically pouncing on him.

But that will come with his first heat. The awkward stages of puberty, though minimal in Will's case, are almost over, and though still a legal minor and possessing of a developing brain and body, the omega's heat will declare his adulthood. Or at least—adult enough to take his alpha's knot, even if he *is* still a child.

There are, of course, alphas who mate with their omegas before their first heats. With a lack of legal consequences, it's not too uncommon, though mostly frowned upon by societal norms. Hannibal finds it arousing but also distasteful, for an omega is ripest at the brink of its first heat, when the tide first spills over and they are desperate to get fucked for days on end. It's all the more enjoyable that way, providing for a more contented mating pair. Hannibal knows this from experience; at his age, he's owned several omegas, though he separated from them as his life changed and grew.

None have been so enticing—or as young—as Will Graham.

Will, who is now climbing into Hannibal's bed as his alpha instructed, face flush with nerves as his curls smush against the silk pillow, eyes narrowed as he struggles to find sleep. Will, who appears even smaller under the duvet, igniting Hannibal's alpha pheromones to protect him…though the only real danger Hannibal can currently sense towards the boy is himself, bottomless desire pooling in his gut and in every moment he spends with him. It will be a miracle if he can persuade his body to wait, just a little longer.

After a moment of breathless hesitation, Hannibal climbs into bed beside his young omega, wrapping himself around the boy's small frame. From where his head rests just behind Will's, lips jutted ever-so-slightly towards the forward curve of the omega's neck, he can inhale

Will’s omega scent directly from the source, and not only that, but the specific scent of *him* , flowery from youth and sharp bitter undertones from his rough upbringing. Pine from the forest. Dog hair. Even the distinct smell of fish that’s been sitting out in the sun for a couple hours. Hannibal breathes in it all, relishing every single aspect.

Slowly, surely, Will relaxes into Hannibal’s touch, and after some minutes, his breathing smooths out into that of slumber. He drools in his sleep, open mouth leaving its mark on Hannibal’s fingers, which have drifted closer to Will’s lips, only half-unintentionally.

Hannibal smiles, letting himself be lulled by the domesticity of it all, and slowly pulls himself away, slipping out from underneath the covers and leaving his omega tucked in as he cleans up the dining room and kitchen. He brings his fingers to his mouth, tasting what’s left of Will’s saliva. It’s a kiss by proxy, an enticing hint at what the real thing is to be like. That little mouth, moving under Hannibal’s, inexperienced but devout in its adoration of its alpha. Perfection, molded through Hannibal’s body with the aid of his mind.

When he returns to the bedroom, Will has spread out, one arm flung awkwardly over the side of the bed as he lies on his back, front of his throat exposed, as if his body was laid on a sacrificial altar and exposed for a sanctified blade. A picture Hannibal could drink in, *soak* in, for hours. He wraps it, preserves it, tucks it away into his memory palace. Then he changes into his own nightclothes, lies down again, and tucks his body around Will’s.

In his sleep, the boy leans against his alpha, head butting his shoulder like a cat, subconsciously knowing who he belongs to—and who he must mark as his own.

Chapter End Notes

i love will being babied by hannibal so i had to write about it<3

A Gentle Hand

Chapter Notes

hello! first of all, i want to apologize that it's literally been over a year since i last updated this fic. i fell into the supernatural fandom and wrote a superlong wincest fic, and discourse happening on twitter turned me off hannibal for a bit. but i began to rewatch a couple weeks ago, and lo and behold, the omegaverse hannigram brainworm has returned! i'm sorry that this chapter isn't very long to make up for the wait, but i've already started writing the next one;)
thank you so, so much to all of the people who've commented on this fic with encouragement, i truly am honored that y'all like it even though we've just barely begun!
i hope you enjoy the chapter.

The one thing Hannibal hadn't anticipated about having a thirteen-year-old omega is that Will is still a child who needs to be taken care of. While he can be by himself for long periods of time, he talks back as he did to Hannibal upon their first meeting, is as restless as a newly house trained puppy, and occasionally stares at their dinners with picky apprehension before his alpha fixes him with a stern look, and Will picks up his fork and eats.

Hannibal debates pulling him out of school. It wouldn't be out of the ordinary, most omegas are largely confined to the home after mating after all, but Will is no ordinary omega, and Hannibal would like to think of himself as an atypical alpha as well. He values Will's cunning, the bright spark in those hazel eyes, and he is not so quick to convert his omega to the housewife lifestyle that he wants to steal that away. No, that won't do.

So Will goes to school, returning for the spring semester of his last year of junior high with a recognizable ring hugging his finger and his head held a little higher. Hannibal ensures that the ring is of the finest quality, the sheen of pure silver catching the light and the eyes of Will's classmates.

With each passing day, his young omega unfurls himself, the physical closedness flattening into a slightly confident gait as he walks from the school building to the Bentley, seeming to bask in the glow of attention from his fellow students. Hannibal's car is classy, and the alpha who steps from it is even classier, always dressed in a three-piece of stiff fabric and opening the passenger door for Will as if the boy was royalty.

Will's entire demeanor changes on the drive back to their home, however. His false bravado fades to a regular comfortableness around Hannibal again, and Hannibal begins to wonder again what other facades Will exposes—to himself, to others. School, then, has been good for his omega's development; it allows him a place other than Hannibal to absorb society in its physicality. And of course, flaunt his new status.

Nearly a week passes before the subject of Will's auction is broached again.

"Why haven't you mated me yet?" Will asks one evening, partially through a bite of orange-glazed salmon. "I expected…when I saw you there at the auction, when I recognized you, I thought…" He looks away, chewing.

Hannibal levels him with a smooth stare. "Swallow your food before speaking, Will."

Will gulps the bite down, and Hannibal thinks it looked rather painful. "Sorry," the boy mumbles quietly.

"Sorry…?"

"Sorry, alpha," the boy amends dutifully, eyes down.

Hannibal allows himself a wane smile. "Good," he replies softly, yet sternly. Will is shaping to be obedient enough, though time can only tell if that will hold—and under what circumstances. He clears his throat gently, and Will looks up.

"You will look at me when you speak, Will."

The omega grimaces. "I know, alpha, I just—I have a hard time with it. Eyes are distracting."

Hannibal lifts his chin, a question.

Will sighs. "It's hard to focus when you're so intent on making eye contact the entire time. Sometimes I'm in the middle of a conversation and I'll realize I don't even remember what the person was saying because I was trying to make eye contact the right amount. Not staring, just, looking." He glances at Hannibal quickly, swallowing. "I'm trying, I really am."

Hannibal softens, gracing Will with a true smile. "It's alright, darling," he replies, watching with pleasure as Will's cheeks turn pink. His words are a reminder to the boy that while Hannibal may be treating him as a son in the moment, they both know that one day, he'll be heavy with Hannibal's pups. And if that doesn't make Hannibal's cock fill slightly in anticipation. He can imagine now—the fullness of the young boy's stomach, stretched under maternity wear, so heavy that it would be easier for Hannibal to serve him meals where he sits, admiring the glow on his cheeks, which will have filled out delightfully by then. Will's legs, pushed out by the swell of his pregnant belly, resting on his tiny omegan cock, just a nub of a thing.

He draws Will a bath that night, thinking about what the omega had said about eye contact. In the single week that Hannibal has known him (aside from their happenstance meeting in the park that allowed this to unfold in the first place), that while shy, Will has proven to be quietly smart, though humble about it, and quite passionate about crime. He reads the *Washington Post* each morning after Hannibal finishes with the front page, scanning the headlines for something that pops out to him. Hannibal finds it admirable; most thirteen-year-old children can't be found with their head behind a newspaper, alpha or otherwise.

He knows, too, that Will struggles at school socially, according to the boy himself. Will tries to hide it, but Hannibal knows that he doesn't have many friends and on occasion gets made fun of for what they call "weirdness" despite Will's new high stature. He imagines that before he bought Will, the boy was bullied even more ruthlessly for being poor, not to mention an omega.

He considers diagnosing the boy with autism. He is licensed to do so for both children and adults. It would be unorthodox to diagnose his own intended mate, but Hannibal is no stranger to unorthodoxy.

He packs the idea away for the evening and retrieves Will once the bath is filled, undressing him with gentle hands that he allow to explore the omega's soft frame. Will sucks in a breath when Hannibal ghosts over each of his nipples, down his back, rising over the curve of his round buttocks before drifting away again. Hannibal can feel Will chasing his touch as he moves away, double-checking the bathwater with one hand. "It's ready," he says, and gestures for Will to step in.

This is another routine. The first few times that Hannibal had undressed Will in this manner, the boy was skittish, dancing away from Hannibal's fingers and asking if he could bathe himself rather than his alpha help him. "I'm thirteen," he'd said just earlier this week, scowling. "I can wash myself."

Rude, Hannibal thought at the time. But Will is only thirteen. His manners will come in time —more swiftly now that he is under Hannibal's supervision.

And now, Will sits back against the curved edge of the porcelain bathtub, leaning his head to the side and showing the vulnerable place where Hannibal will eventually claim him. Smooth, virginal flesh, nearly ripe. *Tease,* Hannibal thinks, but kneels forward to wash his omega, sudsy soap on the boy's youthful, tight skin. A child's skin. His hands stray lower, and Will allows him to lift his leg from the water to wash it, giggling slightly when Hannibal gets to his feet. Back up his legs again, and Hannibal can feel Will's tight inhale as he reaches the tops of Will's thighs.

"I can do that part," Will lets out through what seems to be a held breath. "Alpha," he adds, eyes flicking briefly to Hannibal's before skittering away again.

"Are you sure?" Hannibal asks, voice lilting up melodic in its alphan infusion. He can see his omega faltering, the tenuous balance between desire for autonomy and instincts begging him to give in, be taken care of.

"I mean, whatever's easiest," Will stutters, blinking quickly.

Hannibal smiles, pleasure inside him curling. "Then let me wash you in entirety."

He watches his boy swallow, Adam's apple bobbing slightly. "O-okay."

The skin at Will's hips is even more velveteen than the rest of his body. And the first time Hannibal touching him—it feels divine. In the past few days, the baths that Hannibal has given Will have slowly moved closer to this, a little more each day, but when the pad of his

thumb swipes over his omega's little cock and the boy whines, the wait feels nearly providential. There isn't anything particularly erotic about what Hannibal is doing, but Will is so touch-starved that it's still enough to make him writhe in the bathtub, neck exposing itself further.

"Shh," Hannibal soothes, hand between the boy's legs to wash Will's omegan hole and his asshole, making him shudder. And he—oh, well. Would it be so much to just—?

He presses, slightly, on the tight furl of the omegan hole and watches as Will *keens* beneath his touch, head drooping onto Hannibal's shoulder. Luckily, Hannibal currently is only wearing a bathrobe on top of his pajamas instead of a suit.

"Does that feel good?" he asks, already knowing the answer.

Will doesn't respond, just sniffles.

They drain the bath, and Hannibal carries Will to bed from the bathroom, laying him naked on the duvet.

"What—?" Will begins to ask.

"I'm not going to mate you tonight," Hannibal assures him quickly. "But I wonder if you would indulge me this—" He walks over to the closets as Will struggles to sit up on the soft bed behind him, stepping inside to peer at the rows of satin nightgowns with little lace trims.

"Here," he says, bringing back one of a soft baby blue, removing the hanger and holding up to the boy's small body. "Would you wear this to sleep, darling?"

Will blushes again. "This?"

Hannibal nods curtly, smiling inwardly.

Will swallows, reaching up to touch the fabric. "It's so…"

"Mature?" Hannibal suggests. "Will, you are an of-age omega. You will reach your first heat very soon. Likely before the school year ends. For all intents and purposes, you are already mated."

Warmth fills him as Will stares up at him, childlike nervousness filling his beautiful blue-green eyes, and slowly, the omega nods, then hesitates. "Can I…change alone?"

Hannibal smiles. "You may, dear Will. Here—use this room; I will wait outside. When you are dressed, you may knock to let me know you are finished."

Will nods demurely. "Yes, alpha."

For a second, Hannibal can swear he sees a flash of something almost *devious* in Will's eyes.

And then it's gone.

He waits outside as he promised, hands folded over each other in front of him, imagining what Will must look like inside, holding the soft satin to his flat chest not yet breasted with milk, undressing and then pulling it over his head.

A minute passes. Then three. Will still hasn't knocked.

"Will?" Hannibal asks, knocking on the bedroom door himself. "Are you finished getting dressed?"

There is no answer on the other side. Frowning, Hannibal turns the knob, opening the door to find the hanger and no satin slip—nor Will himself. His omega isn't on the bed, nor under it, hiding. He's not in the bathroom, nor the walk-in closet. Growing suspicious, Hannibal returns to the main part of the bedroom and feels a rush of chill across his face.

There, on the far side of the bed, the window is open, and the curtains are fluttering with a slight breeze.

Between Worlds

Chapter Notes

thank you for all your kind comments on the last chapter <333

Will has always known his status as an omega. It was first obvious from the second hole he possessed at birth—more of a slit, really—and his father made sure he knew it, never refusing an opportunity to remind his son that he was little more than expensive breeding stock. Will grew up with a future cemented in stone: he would be sold to bring a fortune to his family if he was deemed valuable and attractive, and still a decent enough sum if he was not. He tried to assure himself it didn't matter when he was little—he looked no different from other boys in the bathrooms at school, and if there was any reason for him never having many friends—well, Will preferred to be alone, anyway. He was just as unsettled by other people as they were by him. And he already knew what was approaching him.

He heard the words 'alpha' and 'omega' thrown around by the other kids excitedly when they were graduating elementary school and enrolling in junior high—a couple of the taller, more assertive boys claimed to be alphas to intimidate everyone else. Will wasn't phased, and eventually, he learned that he'd been right to doubt them—they were betas, just like most everyone.

Both alphas and omegas are rare, read the history textbook in sixth grade. *While there is a genetic component, there is still research on what the catalyst is for differentiation from the typical population.* Around puberty, full presentation would commence—and commence it did. Will had already begun using the stalls in the boys' restrooms to hide the fact that his penis still hadn't grown for several years now, no longer than the length of a knuckle on one of his hands when soft, and perhaps two knuckles when hard. He had testes, but those stayed miniscule, too. And worst of all—he could *smell* himself, so different from the scents of the other boys that he was beginning to recognize as well.

He learned then, who was an alpha, and who was an omega. The textbook had been right. There *were* dramatically few of them, and they all could smell each other. It was exhilarating at first, though of course that couldn't last. Most of the kids, the betas, couldn't smell a thing, but the few alphas soon educated the rest. It was an education in *humiliation,* to Will.

He began to hitch rides all over the Chesapeake, wherever people would take him. Most of them were needy alphas keen on getting their dicks wet, though Will fought off every advance he could. He became good at fending them off. Knee to the knot. Heel of the palm against the bottom of the chin. Biting, especially—biting hard. Evolution had afforded omegas the same sharpness of teeth as alphas, and Will was never one to waste an opportunity.

He learned to run, and run *fast.*

Will's feet have begun to hurt, and he can feel the cold December air slicing him to the bone, wind picking up around his baby blue slip. He tries to hold down the edge of it where it tickles his mid-thigh, and underneath he wears no underwear, such was his alpha's request. The wind bites at the space between his legs, the large swaths of bare skin.

Worst of all, he has no clue where he is. Baltimore is massive, and though Will's been in the city a few times, his school is closer to Quantico, where he'd lived before the past couple weeks. Even DC is closer, and he's been there on a few school trips. It wouldn't feel so alien as Baltimore does to him now.

It settles upon him then—that he's barefoot on the sidewalk pavement, and he can feel the places where rocks have dug into his feet and scratched his heels. His chest aches with the biting wind, and eventually Will slows, panting as he leans against the nearest lamppost. He's gone far enough that his surroundings have shifted from large stately houses to a more commercial area of the city, but still not in a place where he could find a twenty-four hour convenience store. Everything around here is just a little too fancy, alien. It makes Will lose his already short breath a little, makes him collapse against the lamppost and his eyes flutter closed, tears beginning to push behind his lids. Everything stings.

It's not the first time he's felt homesick since moving in with Dr. Lecter, but the first time he realizes that *homesickness* is what it is. Will hadn't expected it standing in that skimpy little auction outfit, so sheer and light it hadn't felt like he was wearing anything. Then, he'd only been terrified. And when Dr. Lecter had chosen him, had *won* him, the whirring fan in his mind had calmed—he was not elated, but he was relieved.

In these past weeks he has imagined his father in his absence. Maybe he sold the house, quit the lease on the lot. Maybe he's halfway across the country by now, flirting with some strange woman, an alpha, even. Maybe she's rich, and they're in love, and Beau Graham ditches his last name, severing his ties to Will altogether.

Will tries not to think about Dr. Lecter's immense wealth, and the fact that his name, too, will soon change. He only wishes it was love, and not simply the only choice he has.

He shivers under the cold light of the lamppost, staring out at the lights that line the city as the hill slopes downwards. He should just. Go back. Where could he go, like this? Anyone would realize he was either an omega runaway or an omega whore, or both, and where would that lead him?

The tears begin to fall in earnest, pooling in his clavicles. He's been so, *so* stupid.

"Child, are you—?"

Will turns abruptly to see a tall, smartly-dressed blonde woman approaching him, though her face falls open in what might be recognition when he faces her with a tear-stained face, even as he tries to wipe them away. "Sorry," he mumbles, turning on his heel and making his way

further down the sidewalk. He can smell her alpha pheromones drifting through the air as she follows him, high heels clicking with each step on the pavement.

“Child,” she tries again, approaching him in longer strides. Will’s fast-walk turns to a run, but it’s already too late—the alpha woman grabs ahold of his shoulder and spins him around, muffling his screech with a hand over her mouth. “Relax,” she hisses, a strong arm around his back. “I’m not going to hurt you.”

It’s nearly midnight in a quiet part of town, and this woman is an alpha, of all people. Will can only narrow his eyes in further suspicion.

“I am not interested in omegas in that way,” the alpha continues, loosening her grip. “And I do apologize that I scared you. I’m going to remove my hand from your mouth, and I would prefer it if you did not scream.”

Will stares at her, this woman with a narrow nose and strong features. There’s something genuine—or enough, at least—in her eyes, and he wonders if perhaps he’s seen her before, too. Slowly, he nods, and the hand on his lips falls.

“It’s clear that you’re an omega running from something,” the alpha eventually says, lips twisted in what almost seems like amusement. “An alpha, perhaps? Has he mistreated you?”

Will shakes his head, grimacing when she turns his head to make him look at her. His eyes remain resolutely pointed downward.

“This is fine material,” she speaks with a hum, running her finger along the side of his nightgown. It’s a sexless touch, but it still makes Will squirm, anxiety prickling with every instinct he has. “You must have a wealthy suitor.”

Will shrugs. “Please let me go.”

The alpha woman smiles at him sadly. “There’s no way I am leaving a young, vulnerable omega out here in the cold by himself. You will come with me until I find out where you’re supposed to be.”

“I’m not *vulnerable,”* Will snaps. “I can fight for myself. I always have.”

“I’m sure you can,” she replies, and Will can’t tell if she’s being sincere or if she’s mocking him. In school, it always felt the same. “But I’m not going to let you test that theory. You will stay the night at my home, and I’m not making an exception to that.”

“And what if I don’t let you take me?”

“You don’t have to let me do anything. But I *will* call the police and let them hunt you down if you resist. And I’m sure your alpha won’t be happy about that when he finds you. Most alphas…don’t like them getting involved.”

Will feels something icy clutching at his chest. “You know who he is, don’t you?”

“I know most alphas in this city,” the woman murmurs. “But regardless, I won’t take you back to whoever he is right away. You may have a night of rest.”

The offer is tempting, and Will is too tired to resist. His shoulders sink, and he lets the alpha before him take the lead. “Okay,” he says softly.

The window has been shut, and Hannibal has been driving around the neighborhood in the Bentley for nearly thirty minutes, seemingly going nowhere, when his cell rings with a call from Bedelia Du Maurier.

“Hannibal?” she says, softly into the receiver. “I have him.”

End Notes

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